High cost of newsprint

267. SHRI A. VIJAYARAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the cost of newsprint in the country has gone very high in the last one year;

(b) if so, whether Government is considering increasing production of the newsprint in Government-run newsprint factories; and

(c) whether Government is aware of the fact that small scale newspapers and publications are on the verge of closing due to high price in newsprint?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) to (c) The cost of Newsprint has shown a fluctuating trend during the last one year. The cost of the newsprint in December, 2007 was Rs.31,000/- per ton which increased to Rs.44,000/- per ton in May, 2008 and decreased to Rs.38,000/- per ton in December, 2008 (Source: CMIE). Expansion-cum-diversification projects to augment the capacity of Government run M/s. Hindustan Newsprint Limited, a subsidiary of M/s. Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited, with swing facility to produce Newsprint or Writing Paper depending upon the remunerative sales realization and demand is under implementation. Further, the Government have waived Customs Duty on import of newsprint to reduce the cost and to help the print industry.

Impact of Gorkhaland agitation on Darjeeling tea industry

268. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Darjeeling tea and tourism industries are facing a huge revenue loss on account of the ongoing Gorkhaland agitation; and

(b) if so, the details of steps taken Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) and (b) The industry in Darjeeling has been affected on account of the ongoing Gorkhaland agitation. The Government of India is having regular deliberations on the issue with the State Government duty keeping in view the security/law and order related implications.

Meeting shortage of army officers

269. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the shortage of army officers has emerged as a stumbling block to the speedy setting up of four regional National Security Guard (NSG) hubs in the country;